

"HENRY GEORGE HOODOO"

A RIGHT ROYAL ROAST. THE ICONOCLAST MADE HARD TO CATCH.

Letter to the Editor, The Iconoclast, Galveston, Tex., August 12, 1897.

Mr. W. C. Brann:

In your editorial on the "Henry George Hoodoo," which appears in the August number of the ICONOCLAST, the following passage occurs: "It seems to me that I have treated the Single Taxers as fairly as they could ask, and if I now proceed to state a few plain truths about them and their faith they will have no just cause to complain."

From the tone and tenor of these words it is fair to assume that in the editorial referred to you have discharged against the Single Taxers and their faith the heaviest broadsides of which your ordnance is capable. If, notwithstanding all the time you have wasted "crucifying the economic mooncalf" which has played such sad havoc with the wits of Single Taxers, it should turn out that the monstrous concept, far from being crucified, annihilated, or even "dying of its own accord," only gathers strength, energy, and renewed activity from the healthful exercise with which you provide it, must it not seem the part of prudence for you, even if occasion of regret for us, that you should abandon the war and leave the calf to his fate?

Your belated and apparently desperate resolve to "tell some plain truths" about us, Single Taxers, justifies the inquiry, what were you telling before? The fact that it seems to yourself that you have treated Single Taxers fairly is not absolutely irrefragable proof that they have been so treated at least it has not brought conviction of the fact to them.

That the offer of your space to Mr. George was courteously declined affords no just ground for refusing it to those "whose matin hymn and vesper prayer reads, there is no God but George," etc. I'll warrant you that if you and the Single Taxers had access on equal terms to a journal which neither controlled, and whose space both were bound to respect, you would not have to go outside the limits of your own state to find a dozen foemen worthy of your steel, and I'd stake my life on it

that you'd find not a few to unhorse you.

This is not claiming that any one of them, or all of them together, can come anywhere near you in the artistic manipulation of words or the construction of ear-tickling phrases; but it is claiming, and that without any false pretense of modesty, that they have yet seen no reason to fear you in rigidly logical argument when the Single Tax is the question at issue. Their cause is so palpably just, its underlying principle so transparently simple and elementary, its practical application so direct, feasible and efficient that no mere wizardry of words, no thimble-riggery or language, can by any possibility obscure the principle--or confuse the advocates.

Of course there are among Single Taxers, as among other enthusiasts, men who indiscreetly use abuse for argument, and of these you may have some reason to complain; but should not your great talents and the immense advantages which the undisputed control of your own journal give you, enable you to rise above their abuse, to ignore it completely, and to grapple with only those who present you with argument? I have no right to expect from you more consideration than has been meted out to better men; still, you can but refuse this rejoinder to your August editorial, which is respectfully offered for publication in your journal. If you are quite sure of your ground, you can only gain strength from exposing my weakness, but even if you are not sure of it, both the requirements of simple justice and the amende honorable to Single Taxers would still plead for the publication of this article.

You say that Mr. George has obtained no standing of consequence in either politics or economics "because his teachings are violative of the public concept of truth." Do you really believe that the fact that he has obtained no standing of consequence in politics is in any way derogatory to his character or his teaching? Do you not know full well that a Bill Sykes, a Jonas Chuzzlewit, or a Mr. Montague Tigg would have a hundred chances to attain that distinction to-day to the one chance that Henry George, Vincent de Paul or even Jesus Christ would have? Don't you know this well, and if you do, why do you use it as an argument against Henry George?

As to his standing in economics, that, I submit, is a matter of opinion. You think he has no standing of consequence; I think his teaching is the most active ferment in the economic thought of to-day. We may be both mistaken, but whether we are or

not cuts no figure in the truth or falsity of the Single Tax. But it is worth while to point out that the reason you have given for his lack of "standing" lends neither weight nor force to your argument. "Because," you say, "his teachings are violative of the public concept of truth."

When did the public concept of truth become the standard by which to test it? The public concept of the best form of money is, and has been for thousands of years, gold and silver coins. I am much mistaken if that be your concept. By the way, why did you not say "violative of truth," instead of "violative of the public concept," etc.? I guess you had an inward consciousness that a thing is not true or false by public concept, but by being inherently so.

What Henry George taught was inherently true or false before he ever taught it, and would be so still if he had been never born. The only difference would be that so many of us who now bask in the blessed light of inward, if not of outward, freedom would, in that event, be still barking with the great blind multitude over every false trail along which blinder teachers might be leading them and us.

You admit that Mr. George is a polemic without a peer, and you say that "no other living man could have made so absurd a theory appear so plausible, deceived hundreds of abler men than himself." Surely there is something very faulty in the position you assume here. If what you say be so, how do you know that you are not yourself the victim of deception at the hands of some inferior? Or is it only men who have "gone daft on Single Tax" that possess the extraordinary power of leading abler men than themselves by the nose? Surely that were too much honor for an antagonist to concede to them.

More surely still, if a man's intelligence is not proof against deception by inferiors in argument, he can never reach finality in a process of reasoning, and logical proof for him there is none. "He mistakes the plausible for the actual and by his sophistry deceives himself." O pshaw! We all say things sometimes that just do for talk, but this hasn't even that poor excuse. I might just as well say, "He takes the conceivable for the supposable and by his logic enlightens himself. One statement would be as valuable as the other and neither would be worth a pinch of snuff.

Come, let us argue with dignity and composure, like honest men sincerely searching after truth, and eager to lend a hand in abolishing this social Inferno of

legalized robbery which fairly threatens to consume us all. There is, you'll admit, such a thing as land value, i. e. value attaching to land irrespective of improvements made in or on it by private industry. This value arises from the presence of a community and can never actually exist without it. If the exclusive creator or producer of a thing is its rightful owner, land belongs to the community that creates or produces it, and can never, in the first instance, rightly belong to any other owner.

The Single Tax is the taking of this value for this community. Is it just? The highest homage, the highest act of faith which the human mind and heart can offer to God is to say that He could not be God and pronounce the Single Tax unjust! Here now is a gage of battle cast at the feet of whoever wishes to take it up, be the same logician, metaphysician or theologian. (Pardon me, Mr. Brann, for momentarily turning aside from you.)

The justice of the Single Tax is beyond all question of refutation. What about its efficiency for the cure of social ills? Here, I think, is where we are widest apart. You say, "the unearned increment is already taken for public use under our present system of taxation." If by "unearned increment" you mean what I have defined as land value (and I think you do) your statement is the wildest and most astounding I ever heard or read from a sane man making an argument. Is it possible you have not learned that where all the land value is taken in taxation there can be no selling value?

And where is the land to-day with a community settled upon it that has not selling value? If land value is already absorbed by taxation, what is it that goes to maintain landlordism? Perhaps you'll contend that landlordism doesn't exist. What value is it that a man pays for when he buys an unimproved lot in the heart of a city? What is it that the boomer booms and the land speculator gambles on when he adds acre to acre and lot to lot without any intention of productive use? What, if not the community value which he expects to attach to his land as a result of increase of population? And what advantage to him as a speculator would this community value be if, as you claim, it is now being absorbed in taxation and should continue to be so absorbed as fast as it arises?

Do landlords in cities and towns retain for themselves only the rent of buildings and hand over to the government the full amount of their ground rents as tax? I

know an old eye-sore of a building in this city not worth \$150, whose occupant pays \$100 a month rent. Do you seriously believe that all of this \$1,200 a year which does not go to the city and state in taxes is rent on the old \$150 rat-warren?

Why, the thing is too childish for serious discussion; and to have discussed it with you without having been driven to it by yourself, I should have regarded as in the nature of a slight on your intelligence. If what you claim as a fact were true, we would have the Single Tax in full swing now and would be fretting ourselves to fiddle-strings, not to bring it about, but to get rid of it for its evil fruit.

As to whether the Single Tax, in full force, would provide enough revenue for municipal, county, state and federal governments, we, Single Taxers, are not greatly concerned. We have our own opinions on that question and can give better reasons for them than our opponents can give for theirs. But the question is not essential to our argument. What we hold to is that until land values fully taxed prove inadequate for the expenses of government economically administered, not one cent should be levied on labor products, no matter in whose possession found.

This, however, belongs to the fiscal side of our reform. Of infinitely more importance is the social side. Here our end and aim is to secure to all the sons of Adam an equal right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness by securing to them an equal right in the bounties of nature--and passing strange it certainly is that men who would not dream of denying this right in the abstract are ever ready to anathematize it in the concrete. With the Single Tax in force, that is, with the plain behest of nature observed and respected, no man will hold land out of use when, whether he uses it or not, he must pay to the community its annual value for the privilege of monopolizing it.

No man will hold land for a rise in community value when that value is taken from him for the use of the community as fast as it arises. No man will need to mortgage his home and the earnings of his most vigorous years to a boomer or speculator for the privilege of living on the earth for there will be no boomer or speculator to sell him the privilege, and the privilege itself will have ceased to be such and become an infeasible right.

"He (Mr. George) is a well-intentioned man who confidently believes he can make the poverty-stricken millions prosperous by revoking the taxes of the rich and

increasing the burthens of the poor." Fie, fie! What is to be gained by such transparent, palpable misrepresentation as this? Do you verily believe that land values, which Mr. George proposes to tax, are mainly in possession of the poor? Did you not see--of course you did--a diagrammatic exhibit made not long ago by the New York Herald of the holdings of twenty New York real estate owners?

Let me quote a passage from an article in the New York Journal on this exhibit: "The reason 170 families own half of Manhattan Island, as stated in the Herald, and that 1,800,000 out of the two million residents of Manhattan Island, until very recently, had no interest whatever, except as renters, in this superb property, is because, until the last few years, it required a fortune to own the smallest separate parcel of this great estate. Only the rich could participate in its ownership, its income, its profits."

Now is it your view that all this is but clumsy lying, and that in reality it is the poor people of New York as of other large cities that own the bulk of its land values? Again you say, "He would equalize the conditions of Dives and Lazarus by removing the tax from the palace of the one and laying it upon the potato patch of the other." This statement is much more artistic than the preceding one. It wears a jaunty semblance of truth. Indeed it is true in a sense as far as it goes. But it is vague and incomplete, and for that reason as deceptive and misleading as half truths always are.

With your permission I will fill it out in parenthesis and convert it into an honest whole truth: "He would equalize the conditions of (both freedom and justice for) Dives and Lazarus by removing the tax from the palace of the one (and from the labor products of the other) and laying it upon (the community value of the land occupied by the palace and) the potato patch of the other." Now, if the potato patches of the poor occupy, as a rule, more valuable land than the palaces of the rich, there might be some apparent ground for your contention. It would be only apparent, however, for in such a case the potato patch would be as much out of place as a public school on a wharf front. To devote highly valuable land to ordinary potato culture would be about as sensible as to print the Sunday edition of the Galveston News on costly linen paper.

One of the virtues of the Single Tax is its potency to prevent such stupid waste of opportunity. Your way of stating the case, however, has this virtue that it is a

welcome variation of the old wearisome chestnut about the poor widow owning a valuable lot, etc. You believe Progress and Poverty inspired by the plutocracy, "250,000 of whom own 80 per cent. of the taxable wealth of the country, while the land is largely in possession of the great middle class."

Passing over the source of the inspiration, you have come pretty close to the truth here! Unfortunately for you, however, the statement has no value in the argument. Single Taxers do not need to deny that the great middle class largely own the land, but they do claim, and you won't have the hardihood to deny it, that the plutocracy own the vast bulk of the land values. You will perceive the distinction when you reflect that the land is nearly all out in the country, while the land values are nearly all in the cities and towns.

To tax land according to area is the bug-a-boo you are putting up your guards to; to tax it according to community value is what we invite you to smash if you can. You "cannot understand how a man possessed of common sense could fail to see that removing taxation from the class of property chiefly in the hands of the rich and placing it altogether on property chiefly in the hands of the comparatively poor, could fail to benefit the millionaire at the expense of the working man." Neither can I, if you tax it according to quantity, but that is not the Single Tax and it is time you knew it.

Let me tell you now something that I can't understand--why a man who has the means and the ability to strike giant blows for the cause of the blind, stupid, plundered humanity prefers to waste his time, his talents, his opportunities making himself a straw man and, with that silly-looking thing for antagonist, belaboring all about him like a bull in a china shop. Your sincerest well-wishers, of whom I claim to be one, earnestly hope you will soon change your tactics.

You ask some practical questions which it may be well to answer: "How will you prevent the Standard Oil Company forcing weaker concerns to the wall by the simple expedient of selling below cost of production?" The Standard Oil trust is maintained

(1) by monopoly of oil lands;

(2) by monopoly of pipe lines;

(3) by collusion with railroads.

The Single Tax and its corollaries would absolutely destroy each of these advantages;

(1) by throwing unused oil lands open to all on equal terms;

(2) by government ownership or complete control of pipe lines to all distributing points, such lines being open for use to all oil producers on equal terms;

(3) by exactly analogous treatment of railroads.

With the three-fold monopoly of oil lands, pipe line, and railroad abolished, the Standard Oil trust would find no wall against which to crush weaker concerns.

As to the trust, we hope that the abolishment of the thieves' compact, i.e. the protective tariff, will make the trusts sick unto death. Absolute free trade, a necessary concomitant of the Single Tax, will leave 99 per cent. of the trusts stranded. If any survive it will not be the fault of the Single Tax.

Be it remembered that the evils which the Single Tax is guaranteed to cure are, primarily, land monopoly, and, secondarily, all the other monopolies based upon it; as those of the coal, iron and lumber trust, the Standard Oil trust, etc. "With coal fields leased to the operators by Uncle Sam, how would you prevent Hanna organizing a pool, limiting production, raising prices and reducing wages?" Coal fields are included in the economic term, land. When unused land is free for occupancy, unused coal fields will also be free. If Mark sought to limit production by shutting down his mines, one of two things would happen. Either somebody else would start in to mine coal, or Mark's tax would be raised till the wisdom of either letting go or resuming would dawn on his fat wits. Unless he owned or controlled the coal fields he could not limit production, raise prices, or cut down wages.

"How will you prevent the Standard Oil company forcing weaker concerns to the wall by the simple expedient of selling below cost of production?" We wouldn't prevent them. But if they afterwards tried to recoup their losses by raising prices as

they do now, we might get after them with a tax commensurate with their asinine generosity, and keep after them till other concerns got well on their feet. If they became too refractory, what's to prevent the government from taking hold itself and working the oil wells for the benefit of the whole people?

Remember the government is theoretically the people's servant, and it could be actually so if the people only had a little intelligence and moral courage. You very needlessly tell your Ft. Hamilton friend that land is the primal source of all wealth; that it does not produce wealth, but simply affords man an opportunity to produce it; you forgot to add--provided the landlord doesn't prevent him.

You say in another place, "Figure it as you will, adjust it as you may, a tax is a fine on industry and will so remain until you get blood from turnips," etc. This very objection in protean form is continually being raised by a class of shallow-thinking men with whom the editor of the ICONOCLAST should not be proud to herd.

"What difference does it make," they say, "whether I pay rent to the government or to a landlord when I've got to pay it anyhow? And what difference does it make whether taxes are levied on my land or my improvements, or both, so long as I've got to pay them with the products of my labor?" Now, it is quite true that all taxes of whatever nature are paid out of the products of labor. But must they be for that reason a tax on labor products.

Let us see. I suppose you won't deny that a unit of labor applies to different kinds of land will give very different results. Suppose that a unit of labor produces on A's land 4, on B's 3, on C's 2 and on D's 1. A's land is the most, and D's is the least, productive land in use in the community to which they belong. B's and C's represent intermediate grades. Suppose each occupies the best land that was open to him when he entered into possession. Now, B, and C, and D have just as good a right to the use of the best land as A had. Manifestly then, if this be the whole story, there cannot be equality of opportunity where a unit of labor produces such different results, all other things being equal except the land. How is this equality to be secured? There is but one possible way. Each must surrender for the common use of all, himself included, whatever advantages accrues to him from the possession of land superior to that which falls to the lot of him who occupies the poorest. I

n the case stated, what the unit of labor produces for D, is what it should produce for A, B and C, if these are not to have an advantage of natural opportunity over D. Hence equity is secured when A pays 3, D, 2 and C, 1 into a common fund for the common use of all--to be expended, say in digging a well, making a road or bridge, building a school, or other public utility. Is it not manifest that here the tax which A, B and C pay into a common fund, and from which D is exempt, is not a tax on their labor products (though paid out of them) but a tax on the superior advantage which they enjoy over D, and to which D has just as good a right as any of them.

The result of this arrangement is that each takes up as much of the best land open to him as he can put to gainful use, and what he cannot so use he leaves open for the next. Moreover, he is at no disadvantage with the rest who have come in ahead of him, for they provide for him, in proportion to their respective advantages, those public utilities which invariably arise wherever men live in communities. Of course he will in turn hold to those who come later the same relation that those who came earlier held to him.

Suppose now that taxes had been levied on labor products instead of land; all that any land-holder would have to do to avoid the tax is to produce little or nothing. He could just squat on his land, neither using it himself nor letting others use it, but he would not stop at this, for he would grab to the last acre all that he could possibly get hold of. Each of the others would do the same in turn, with the sure result that by and by, E, F and G would find no land left for them on which they might make a living. So they would have to hire their labor to those who had already monopolized the land, or else buy or rent a piece of land from them.

Behold now the devil of landlordism getting his hoof on God's handiwork! Exit justice, freedom, social peace and plenty. Enter robbery, slavery, social discontent, consuming grief, riotous but unearned wealth, degrading pauperism, crime breeding, want, the beggar's whine, and the tyrant's iron heel. And how did it all come about? By the simple expedient of taxing labor products in order that precious landlordism might laugh and grow fat on the bovine stupidity of the community that contributes its own land values toward its own enslavement!

And yet men vacuously ask, "What difference does it make?" O tempora! O mores! To be as plain as is necessary, it makes this four-fold difference.

- First, it robs the community of its land values;
- second, it robs labor of its wages in the name of taxation;
- third, it sustains and fosters landlordism, a most conspicuously damnable difference;
- fourth, it exhibits willing workers in enforced idleness; beholding their families in want on the one hand, and unused land that would yield them abundance on the other.

This last is a difference that cries to heaven for vengeance, and if it does not always cry in vain, will W. C. Brann be able to draw his robe close around him and with a good conscience exclaim, "It's none of my fault; I am not my brother's keeper." It will not do, my dear friend; you must think again on the Single Tax, even though, in doing so, you might make men suspect that you are not infallible. The sublimest act it will ever be given you to perform is to candidly confess to your grand and ever-growing constituency that you were mistaken in your estimate of the Single Taxers and their faith.

"Government must compel each to pay toll in proportion the amount of wealth it has produced--and this is the only equitable law of taxation." Just reflect for a moment what a monstrous conclusion flows from these premises. Labor applied to land produces all wealth. Landlordism as such produces nothing. Therefore labor should bear the whole burden of taxation, while landlordism and all other forms of monopoly should go scot free. T

he iniquity of our present system of taxation is that a portion of it is levied on land instead of being all levied on labor products, like the tariff! To be strictly just, we must quit taxing land and exact no royalty from owners of coal mines and oil wells! That your view? "There is every indication that his cult has had its day and is rapidly going to join the many other isms, political and religious, that have been swallowed up like cast off clothes and other exuviae by the great mother of dead dogs." This is fine, incontestably fine! Also forcible, impressibly forcible--with the force of a squirt of tobacco juice.

If "the Single Tax party will not long survive its creator," perhaps it is because it

has not as much attraction for the great sovereign voter as the blessed protective tariff, which, to use your own fantastic expression, you should "cosset on your heaving brisket" for its splendid success as a survivor of its primogenitors.

Look at the pinnacle of political success to which the McKinley bill has brought Bill McKinley (excuse the paltry little pun) and sound money (saving your presence) brought Grover Cleveland, and then contemplate the ignominy and obscurity has brought George and free silver has brought Bryan. Evidently George isn't a mouse to McKinley, while Bryan is but a brindle pup compared to the great and only Grover.

Yes, the "public concept of truth" makes it plain that protection is all right and Single Tax all wrong. "George is a reformer who can't reform because he took issue with the wisdom of the world," just like the man who said that the earth was round and that the sun didn't go round it every twenty-four hours, contrary to what the wisdom of the world had long ago decided.

You are not mistaken in saying that "Mr. George was unable to keep one of these expounders of his doctrine (a S.T. paper) from running on the financial rocks." It is a very logical deduction to draw from this fact that the teachings of the paper were worthless.

Why should anybody teach what does not, in the teaching, promote his financial prosperity? See what fools Professors Bemis and Andrews have made of themselves. Because they did not have due regard for the "public concept of the truth" they are cashiered; and it serves them right, for the truth must be vindicated--if it pays.

On the other hand, see what splendid financial successes the ICONOCLAST, the Galveston News and the so-called yellow journalism of New York all are. "Deserve, in order to command success," the old copy-book headline used to say, from which it follows as mud does rain, that whatever succeeds deserves it, and whatever doesn't, doesn't. It doesn't take much besides capital to succeed, however, "where the conditions for the propagation of empiricism are more favorable than ever before." All you have to do is to propagate and expound the "public concept of truth" and let the truth itself alone. The Single Taxers respectfully solicit some more plain truths on the "Mumbojumboism of George."

Thomas Flavin. . . .

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Response from the editor:

Thomas Flavin

Ever since the appearance of my first courteous critique of the Single Tax theory the followers of that faith have been pouring in vigorous "replies"; but as my articles were directed to Mr. George and not to his disciples, I saw no occasion for the latter to intermeddle in the matter, and the tide of economic wisdom went to waste. Although a publisher is supposed to be privileged to select his own contributors, and Mr. George had been requested to make reply at my expense, the Single Taxers raised a terrible hue and cry that the ICONOCLAST was unfair in that it "permitted one side to be presented."

In order to cast a little kerosene upon the troubled waters I decided that they should be heard, and selected Dr. Flavin as their spokesman, believing him to be the ablest of those who have followed this particular economic rainbow into the bogs. So much by way of prolegomenon; now for the doctor.

My very dear sir, I shall heed your advice to "rise above" the abuse of those who mistake impudence for argument, and ignore the discourteous remarks with which you have so liberally interlarded your discourse. Doubtless you include yourself among that numerous tribe of Texas titans who can "unhorse" me as easily as turning a hen over; and having accorded you unlimited space in which to acquire momentum, I would certainly dread the shock were I cursed with an atom of polemical pride. Frankly, I wish you success--trust that you can demonstrate beyond a peradventure of a doubt that all my objections to the Single Tax are fallacious, that it is indeed the correct solution of that sphinx riddle which we must soon answer or be destroyed.

At a time when the industrial problem is pressing upon us with ever increasing power, it is discouraging to hear grown Americans prattling of "unhorsing" economic adversaries--priding themselves on polemical fence, like shyster

lawyers, and seeking victory through sophistry rather than truth by honest inquiry. That is not patriotism, but a picayune partisanship which I profoundly pity.

Regarding "the public concept of truth" which seems to irritate you sorely, I will simply say that the people are slow to accept new and startling truths like those promulgated by Galileo, Newton and Harvey; but a truth, howsoever strange, GROWS year by year and age by age, while a falsehood creates more or less flurry at its birth, then fades into the everlasting night of utter nothingness.

That Mr. George's theory, after several years of discussion, is declining in popular favor, and has never made a convert among the careful students of political economy, is strong presumptive evidence that it is not founded on fact. The more you hammer truth the brighter it glows; the more you hammer Georgeism the paler it gets. It is not for me to prove the fallacy of the Single Tax theory--the onus probandi rests with its apostles, and they but saltate from mistaken premises to ridiculous conclusions. Like the German metaphysicians, they are abstract reasoners who do not trouble themselves about conditions.

It is not well to sneer at "the great blind multitude" because it fails to see the beauty or wisdom in the Single Tax, for many a great man before Lincoln's time had profound respect for the judgment of the common people. "Truth," say the Italians, "is lost by too much controversy;" and while the Georges and Flavins split hairs and spute and spout themselves into error, the hard-headed farmer and mechanic, exercising their practical common-sense, arrive at correct conclusions.

In saying that Mr. George has, by his sophistry, "deceived hundreds of abler men than himself," I simply accredited him with a feat that has been a thousand times performed. Carliostro was an ignoramus and possessed very ordinary intellect, yet for several years he succeeded in deceiving some of the wisest men of his day with his Egyptian Masonry idiocy. Thousands of fairly intelligent people believed poor looney Francis Schlatter a kind of second Messiah, some of the ablest men of Europe were misled by half-crazy Martin Luther--and Dr. Flavin regards Henry George's economic absurdities as omniscience. The latter has "mistaken the plausible for the actual," has deceived himself with his own sophistry, else he and his few score noisy followers are wiser than all the rest of the world, or, for the sake of gain or cheap notoriety, he's peddling what he knows to be arrant nonsense. You may take as many "pinches of snuff" on that proposition as you please.

All your remarks about land values, their origin and rightful ownership--the tiresome old piece de resistance of every Single Tax discourse--I answered fully in my two former articles on this subject, wherein I also explained how the "unearned increment" is at present appropriated by the public, and I cannot afford to rethresh old straw for the benefit of Single Taxers who WILL write and WON'T read.

I will remark en passant, however, that by "unearned increment" I mean exactly what I suppose Mr. George to mean--increase in the market value of land for which the proprietor is not responsible. This, I have explained, is already appropriated by the public, because the total annual increase in land values in this country--barring betterments of course--does not exceed the total annual tax levied upon the land. There's always a boom in land values here and there; but hundreds of millions of acres, urban and suburban, have not increased a penny in selling price during the past decade. The owners are reaping no unearned increment, but they are paying taxes regularly into the public till.

"The exclusive creator or producer of a thing is the rightful owner," says Dr. Flavin. Quite true; and as the only thing the community creates for the land owner is the unearned increment, it has no moral right to take anything more. The Single Taxers persist in ignoring the fact that there is an EARNED as well as an UNEARNED increment, and that the former is as much the property of the individual as the barn he builds or the calf he breeds. Of this earned increment more anon.

"The highest homage, the highest act of faith which the human mind and heart can offer to God is to say he could not be God and pronounce the Single Tax to be unjust!" O hell! That's not argument, but simply empty declamation intended to tickle the ears of the groundlings--to raise a whoop among the gallery gods. As you have suggested, "Come, let us argue with dignity and composure," instead of emitting fanatical screeches like fresh converts at a Methodist camp meeting, let's see about this God of Justice business:

About 200 years ago a party whom we will call Brann, as that happened to be his name "cleared" a farm in the wilds of Virginia, enduring all the hardships and dangers of the frontier. He built roads and bridges, drained swamps, exterminated Indians and wild animals. His descendants helped drive out the British butchers,

some of them being scalped alive by John Bull's red allies, while their wives and children were tomahawked. They contributed in their humble way to secure the blessings of free government which the present inhabitants of Virginia enjoyed. They helped support schools, churches and charities and otherwise make the district desirable as a place of residence. Finally railways were built and stores opened, not to enrich these people, but to be enriched by them.

These conveniences added to the value of the land, but were paid for at a good round price, as such things ever are by the users. The land is now worth about \$30.00 an acre, and while this value is unquestionably due to the presence of population, {sic} it is fair to assume that in two centuries the estate has yielded that much in the shape of taxes. As the present owner, I ask, has the Old Dominion against that property for unearned increment? I say it has not; that the \$30.00 an acre represents the savings of seven generations of my ancestors; that while the community created the land value, said value has been duly purchased and paid for--that it represents EARNED increment.

Unearned increment is not what Dr. Flavin is after; he would confiscate the RENT of my patrimony; he would deprive me of the VALUES created by my people--would allow me no larger share therein than he accords to the newly arrived immigrant from that damned island we call England. If our God says THAT is just, then I want no angelic wings--prefer to associate with Satan.

Has the son a just right to wealth created and solemnly bequeathed him by his sire? That land is as much mine as the gold would be mine, had my people their savings in that shape, and the rent is mine as justly as the interest on the gold would be. It is quite true that none of my clan CREATED that land; it is true that I cannot show a title to it signed by God Almighty and counter- signed by the Savior, any more than I can show a title from the same high source to the watch I hold in my hand; but I have a title to all the rights, conveniences and profits appertaining to control of the land, issued by their creator, the community, for value received. I have the same title to the land that I have to the watch; not to the material made by the Almighty, but to whatsoever has been added of desirability thereto by the action of man. The community has been settled with up-to-date for both the land and the watch, but has a continuing claim against them so long as it enables me to employ them advantageously than I could without its assistance.

If I sell my land the purchaser receives in return for his money all those advantages which it required so many years of toil and danger to win--he pays for the sacrifices made by others in preference to going into the wilderness and making them himself. The market value of my land is a "labor product," just as my watch is a labor product, hence all this prattle about relieving industry of governmental burdens by any economic thaumaturgy whatsoever is the merest moonshine.

It is quite true that "the great middle class" does not own the most valuable lots in New York and London; but I have the "chilled steel" hardihood to affirm that not only the bulk of the land but of the land values are in the possession of people who are poor as compared with the occupants of those sumptuous palaces which the George conspiracy for the further enrichment of Dives and the starvation of Lazarus would exempt from taxation.

The total wealth of this nation is not far from 75 billions, while all the land, exclusive of improvements, would not sell for more than 20 billion. The naked land of our 5 million farms is estimated at about 10 billion, so that leaves but about 10 billion for urban lands--less than one-seventh of the total value. I have no reliable statistics at hand showing what proportion of urban inhabitants own their homes; but we may safely assume that one-half do so. Now, if this be true, we may also assume that the land values held by the very wealthy--the people whom the Single Taxers profess to be after,--do not exceed one-fourth of all land values, or one-fifteenth of total property values. Hence you see it is quite possible for 250,000 to own 80 per cent of ALL values, while the bulk of the LAND values remain with the common people. And it is these common people that the Single Tax will crush for the benefit of these 250,000 plutocrats, the bulk of whose wealth is in personal property.

it down and think it over, doctor; you are really too bright a man to be led astray by the razzle-dazzle of Single Tax sophistry. You do your enviable reputation for intelligence a rank injustice by mistaking poor old George for an economic Messiah, and if you are not careful somebody will try to sell you a gold-brick or stock in a Klondike company. Suppose that you and Hon. Walter Gresham occupy residence lots worth \$1,000 each, but that you inhabit a \$1,500 cottage and he a \$150,000 mansion; and suppose that your income is \$2,000 a year while his is \$20,000: Do you think there is any necessity for tearing your balbriggan undershirt because not compelled to put up as much for the maintenance of government as

your wealthy neighbor? Is it at all probable that Gresham will become discouraged, refuse to longer serve the corporations and sit in the woodshed and sulk, even jump off the bridge, because taxed in proportion to the property in his possession rather than according to the land he occupies?

If Col. Moody builds a million dollar cotton mill on suburban land worth but \$500 why should you refuse to sleep o' nights because not required to pay double the taxes of that old duffer? As a worthy disciple of Aesculapius you should know that too heavy a burden on your own back is liable to make you bow-legged.

I suspected all along that the Single Tax would require several able-bodied "corollaries" to enable it to effect much of a reformation, to usher in the Golden Age. It were very nice to throw unused coal and oil lands "open to all on equal terms," have the government pipe off all their products for equal pay, then compel operators by piling on taxes to maintain high prices to consumers "till other companies got well on their feet"--and a combination was effected. If Rockefeller, Hanna, Carnegie, et id genes omnes tried any of their old tricks "we might get after them"--just as we HAVE long been doing. These plutocrats are so afraid of our politicians that there is danger of their dying of neuropathy. If the coal, iron and oil operators advance prices we'll advance their taxes--for the people to pay. And I suppose that when the whiskey trust get gay, the doctor will raise the rent of corn land, when the cotton-seed oil trust becomes too smooth, he'll knock it on the head by adding a dollar an acre to cotton land, and so on until we get the cormorant fairly by the goozle. It's all dead easy when you understand it--works as smoothly as an "iridescent dream" on a toboggan slide! We are continually discovering new coal, iron and oil districts, and these are "open to all on equal terms"--I can acquire them just as cheaply as can Rockefeller or Carnegie.

Then what's the matter? I lack the capital to properly develop them, to produce so cheaply as my wealthy competitors. Or if able to become a thorn in the side of the great corporations they either lower prices and freeze me out or make it to my advantage to enter the syndicate. When Rockefeller lowers the price of oil he lowers his rent; when I am either crushed by competition or taken in out of the cold, he advances the price of oil. His rent is regulated by competition for the use of oil lands--you cannot make him pay more than the market price. When you raise his rent you raise that of all the other operators in proportion, and the same is the same as an increase of the excise on whisky--the people get a meaner grade of

goods at a higher price.

If an ordinary man cooked up such a scheme as that for the benefit of the people, I'd feel justified in calling him a "crank," and I cannot conceive how a man like Dr. Flavin can tack his signature to such tommy-rot. Before we can make the Single Tax "a go" we've got to have government ownership of telegraphs, railways, pipelines, etc., etc., and use the taxing power to regulate prices just as the Republicans do the tariff--and for what? To humble the haughty landlord? Oh no; to knock the stuffing out of capital--so long wept over by Single Taxers as a fellow sufferer with toil.

Why not call the George system Communism?--"a rose by any other name," etc. When the doctor get matters arranged it will really make no difference whether a farmer is located in the black-waxy district, or on the arid cactus-cursed lands of the trans-Pecos country, as he will have to surrender to the public all he produces in excess of what the poorest land in use will yield. He will have no incentive to study the capabilities of his land and bring to bear upon it exceptional industry, for he will be deprived of all the increase he can make it yield by such methods. A will be placed on a parity with D because he took the best land he could get instead of the poorest he could find. Intelligence and enterprise are to have no reward under the new regime. You can squat on a sand-bank or pile of rocks in any community and be on a financial parity with the man whose black soil reaches to the axis of the earth--no need to bundle the old woman into a covered wagon, tie the brindled cow to the feed-box and head for a country where better land is to be had. There will be no temptation to carve out a home in the wilderness, for later immigrants will set at naught your toil and sacrifices and deprive your children of their patrimony--the best situated merchant in Waco will have no advantage of the keeper of a tent store on a side street of Yuba Dam or Tombstone. A tax will not longer be "a fine on industry"--it will be a fine on fools.

My Galveston friend should not work himself into a fit of hysteria because I declared that the George doctrine has had its day, it being sheer folly to quarrel with a self-evident fact. When Henry George first flamed forth he made a great deal of money out of his writings, and has thus far shown no more aversion to the silver than has your humble servant. His paper was doubtless launched with a view of promoting his financial and political fortunes, for he did not go broke publishing it "for the good of the cause," but promptly rung off when he found that it did not

PAY, hence I fail to see that he is entitled to any more credit than Col. Belo or myself. I called attention to the failure of his paper, not in a spirit of rejoicing over its downfall, but simply to accentuate the fact, after giving some years to consideration of his rather pretty platitudes, that people condemned them--that his heroic attempt to reclothe with living flesh the bones of the impot unique had proven a dismal failure.

Now, my dear doctor, I have not undertaken in this hasty article to fully expose this Single Tax fallacy, having attended to that heretofore, but simply to answer a few of your arguments which I had not hitherto heard. Let's drop the subject--let the dead go bury its dead, while we devote our energies to LIVING issues. _